

Remarks/Arguments:

This is a reply to the office action of September 2, 2005.

The Examiner is alleging that the subject-matter of the independent claims (claims 3, 6 and 8) lacks novelty over the disclosures of US-6311892 (O'Callaghan et al).

In response to the rejection, claim 6 is being amended so as further to distinguish the claimed invention over the disclosures of O'Callaghan et al. Claim 7 is also being amended for purposes of clarity.

It is submitted that the subject-matter of these independent claims is clearly distinguished over the disclosures of O'Callaghan et al.

Claims 3 and 6 define a method which comprises the steps of scanning a band on a mail piece to detect for a sequence of transitions between areas of light and dark reflectance within the band, and generating an indication of a presence of an imprint of a postal indicium on detection of a transition succeeding a predetermined number of initial transitions at the start of the sequence of transitions.

Claim 8 defines the counterpart apparatus for imprinting postal indicia on mail pieces, and comprises a first sensor for detecting the sequence of transitions, and means operative to generate the indication of a presence of an imprint of a postal indicium on detecting a signal corresponding to a transition occurring after a predetermined number of transitions.

O'Callaghan et al makes no disclosure or suggestion of the method or apparatus as now claimed.

The Examiner has referenced a number of passages in O'Callaghan et al which mention image processing means for the recognition of indicia and printing means for the printing of mail piece identifiers, but, contrary to the claimed invention, the processing means scans not the identifiers as printed by the printing means, but rather existing indicia, which are entirely separate and unrelated to the printed identifiers.

O'Callaghan et al includes a printer (104) for printing identification information on each mail piece, and a camera (105) for inter alia verifying barcodes. However, contrary to the claimed invention, the camera (105) is operative to scan a barcode prior to operation of the printer (104) [see, for example, column 4, lines 36 and 37].

O'Callaghan et al also includes a barcode scanner (205), but the scanner (205) scans information on the trays which contain the mail pieces, and not the mail pieces in the manner as required by the claimed invention. The Examiner has to distinguish between the mail pieces and the trays which contain the same. The present invention is not concerned with trays and tray labels.

There is no suggestion whatsoever of a system which imprints a mail piece with a postal indicium, and subsequently scans that mail piece to generate an indication of a presence of the imprint, as required by the claimed invention.

This notwithstanding, there is certainly no suggestion of the generation of an indication of a presence of an imprint of a postal indicium on detecting a transition following a predetermined number of transitions, as required by the claimed invention.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the claims presented patentably distinguish the invention from the disclosures of O'Callaghan et al.

Respectfully submitted,



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